

**FILED**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO

AO 91 (Rev. 11/11) Criminal Complaint

## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FEB 08 2024

for the  
District of New MexicoMITCHELL R. ELFERS  
CLERK OF COURT

United States of America )

v. )

Patricia Villanueva )

Case No. 24-MJ-185

Defendant(s)

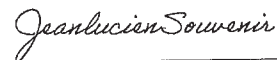
**CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of October 22, 2023 in the county of Roosevelt in the  
District of New Mexico, the defendant(s) violated:*Code Section*  
18 U.S.C. 844(i)*Offense Description*  
Actual or attempted damage or destruction, by means of fire or explosives,  
any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property used in interstate or  
foreign commerce.

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See Affidavit for Criminal Complaint, attached and incorporated herein, by reference.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

Complainant's signature

Jean-Lucien Souvenir, U.S. Postal Inspector

Printed name and title

Electronically signed and sworn to before me telephonically.

Date:

2/8/24



Judge's signature

City and state:

Roswell, New Mexico

Barbara Smith Evans, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

PATRICIA VILLANUEVA,

Defendant.

**AFFIDAVIT FOR CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

I, Jean-Lucien Souvenir, having been duly sworn, do depose and state as follows:

**INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND**

1. I am a United States Postal Inspector and have been so employed since November 2019. I am assigned to the Phoenix Division, Albuquerque Domicile, Albuquerque, New Mexico. One of my responsibilities is to investigate crimes involving the United States Postal Service (USPS). I have been trained to work on numerous federal criminal investigations. Prior to my appointment as a U.S. Postal Inspector, I served as a Criminal Investigator with the United States Marshals Service in El Paso and San Antonio, Texas, for nine years. I hold a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice from Florida International University in Miami, Florida. During my career as a federal law enforcement officer, I have participated in the investigations of crimes of violence, financial crimes, robberies, burglaries, and drug trafficking investigations.
2. This Affidavit is made for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause that Patricia VILLANUEVA (VILLANUEVA) committed the following criminal offenses: Title 18, United States Code, Section 844 (i) Actual or attempted damage or destruction, by means of fire or explosives, any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property used in interstate or foreign commerce.

3. My knowledge of the facts alleged in this Affidavit arises from my training and experience, my personal observations, my participation in the investigation described below, information developed by law enforcement agents, and my discussions with witnesses. This Affidavit is intended to show only that there is sufficient probable cause for the requested warrant and does not set forth all of my knowledge about this matter.

**INVESTIGATIVE DETAILS**

4. On or about June 5, 2023, several homeless individuals were sleeping in the 24 hour lobby of the Portales, New Mexico U.S. Post Office, including the defendant, Patricia Villanueva (VILLANUEVA). Also around that time, an employee of the post office ousted the individuals from the lobby due to the deteriorating condition of the lobby area, and vandalism to the lobby including a fire that had been set to the post office's bulletin board.
5. On October 23, 2023, the Postmaster notified me of an arson incident involving a U.S. Postal Service Long-Life Vehicle (LLV). According to the Postmaster, someone inserted a piece of cloth into the fuel tank of the LLV and lit the cloth on fire. The fuel cap, fuel door, and the surrounding area near the fuel tank were burned. The LLV was last used on Saturday October 21, 2023. At approximately 4:00 PM, the assigned U. S. Postal Service (USPS) letter carrier parked the LLV in the Portales, New Mexico Post Office parking lot.
6. I contacted the Roosevelt County Electric Cooperative (RCEC). The RCEC building is located next to the post office and has several cameras around its property to include cameras facing the post office's parking lot where the LLV was parked. My review of the footage obtained from RCEC revealed that on Sunday, October 22, 2023, a dark, gray, older model vehicle, later identified as a Chevrolet Malibu (the Malibu) was driving around the post office. The Malibu had the following distinguishing features: New Mexico Chili license plate, dark tinted windows, black rims, broken/missing part of the front bumper, and faded roof.

7. RCEC cameras captured the Malibu traveling on Main Street on the day in question. At approximately 12:12 PM, the Malibu turned right on W. Commercial Street and made a left on Avenue A. At approximately 12:19 PM, the Malibu was seen exiting the alley between RCEC and the post office, onto Main Street.
8. I also reviewed video footage from High Supply Cannabis Shop. The cameras from the shop face Main Street and the alley shared by the post office and RCEC. Footage from the shop's cameras captured the Malibu's line of travel. The line of travel was the same captured by RCEC cameras. The Malibu entered the postal property from an alley off Avenue A. The Malibu was then parked next to the LLV. The unidentified driver exited the Malibu and walked towards the LLV. The driver was seen doing this twice. The Malibu left a few minutes later.
9. I also reviewed surveillance footage from the county courthouse. The footage showed the Malibu turn left on Avenue A and enter the parking lot of another business located behind the post office. The Malibu is seen three to four minutes later entering the alley between RCEC and the post office. The Malibu is seen again about two minutes later leaving the post office parking lot and exiting the alley. The departure time was around 12:19 PM. Its line of travel showed it was headed towards Main St. The angle from the cameras didn't capture the incident, but showed the Malibu driving past the parking lot of the post office where the LLVs were parked.
10. On October 25, 2023, Detective J. Hall of the Portales Police Department (PPD) and I were patrolling the city in connection with this investigation, and saw the Malibu depicted in the videos. The Malibu was operated by an unknown Hispanic female wearing glasses. A license plate check revealed the vehicle was registered to Mireya Valdez. Records checks on Valdez revealed she was in custody in Grants, New Mexico.



11. During mobile surveillance, I observed the Malibu parked at 1402 S Avenue J, in Portales. There was a female sitting in the driver's side of the vehicle whose face could not be seen, and a Caucasian male standing in the driveway (SOI #1).
12. On October 26, 2023, Postal Inspector C. Castro and I interviewed SOI #1 and asked SOI #1 about the woman seen with SOI #1 the previous day in the driveway. SOI #1 stated SOI #1 didn't really know her. SOI #1 stated SOI #1 was at the house visiting SOI #1's friend. SOI #1 was asked if SOI #1 knew her name. SOI #1 said SOI #1 thought her name was "Patricia." SOI #1 didn't know her last name. SOI #1 indicated Patricia was also visiting the same friend. SOI #1 was asked about the arson, and SOI #1 denied any knowledge or involvement.
13. I asked Detective Hall if he knew anyone named Patricia, and he stated that the only Patricia in town he knows of is Patricia VILLANUEVA. I conducted a criminal history check which revealed VILLANUEVA's lengthy criminal history, including a 2019 arrest for arson; a charge that was ultimately dismissed. While reviewing VILLANUEVA's criminal history, I observed some of VILLANUEVA's booking photographs, and her driver's license photograph. VILLANUEVA resembled the woman I saw operating the Malibu on October 25, 2023, in Portales.
14. On November 2, 2023, I interviewed SOI #2. SOI #2 stated on Saturday October 21, 2023, at approximately 3:00 PM, SOI #2 saw VILLANUEVA and an unidentified male parked at a business which faces RCEC. SOI #2 stated SOI #2 knew it was VILLANUEVA because SOI #2 knows her. SOI #2 was shown a photo of VILLANUEVA and stated it was her.
15. SOI #2 indicated the hood of the car VILLANUEVA was in was open as if her and the unknown male were working on it. SOI #2 provided a description of the vehicle. The description SOI #2 provided matched the description of the Malibu. A picture of the Malibu was shown to SOI #2 who confirmed it was the vehicle SOI #2 saw VILLANUEVA in the day prior to the arson of the LLV.

16. SOI #2 didn't know who the vehicle belonged to. After telling SOI #2 the registered owner was Valdez, SOI #2 stated SOI #2 knew who Valdez was, and stated Valdez and VILLANUEVA are friends. SOI #2 was shown a photo of Valdez and confirmed it was her.
17. On November 6, 2023, Inspector Castro and I interviewed SOI #3.
18. SOI #3 stated VILLANUEVA is SOI #3's friend. SOI #3 last saw her on November 1, 2023. SOI #3 indicated VILLANUEVA visits SOI #3 twice a week. SOI #3 also indicated she had a car but when SOI #3 last saw her, she walked over to SOI #3's house. SOI #3 stated VILLANUEVA'S car was towed from Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU) campus two weeks prior. SOI #3 was asked to describe the car. The description SOI #3 provided was consistent with the description of the Malibu. SOI #3 was shown a photo of the Malibu and acknowledge that it was VILLANUEVA's car. SOI #3 stated VILLANUEVA doesn't allow anyone to drive the car. SOI #3 further stated the vehicle's back seat is full of clothes and other belongings. SOI #3 believes VILLANUEVA may be living out of the vehicle.
19. Inspector Castro and I went to the ENMU Police Department (ENMUPD) to confirm SOI #3's account of VILLANUEVA's vehicle being towed from the campus. Inspector Castro and I were assisted by J. Tweedy, ENMUPD Support Specialist; and C. Baker, ENMUPD Captain. Captain Baker was able to confirm that VILLANUEVA's vehicle was towed from the campus on October 26, 2023. He also provided me with a copy of the footage from the lapel video Officer A. Torres was wearing when he encountered VILLANUEVA.
20. The lapel video showed that VILLANUEVA was approached by Officer Torres. She was in the Malibu and was using the electrical outlet of the post office at the ENMU campus to charge a car battery. VILLANUEVA identified herself to Officer Torres as the owner of the Malibu. She matched the description of the Hispanic woman Detective Hall, and I observed operating the Malibu on October 25, 2023. VILLANUEVA told Officer Torres that the vehicle belonged to her, but she needed to change the title to her name because the original owner was in jail. Officer Torres ran the license plate, which showed Mireya Valdez as the

registered owner. Records checks conducted on VILLANUEVA revealed that she didn't have a valid driver's license. Records checks conducted on the Malibu revealed the vehicle was not registered and had no insurance.

21. Inspector Castro and I traveled to A5 Towing Yard, located at 8201 NM-206, Portales, NM., 88130, and captured photos of the Malibu. The vehicle was full of personal belongings which could be seen through the windows. The Malibu was the same vehicle seen on surveillance footage from three separate businesses the day that the LLV was set on fire at the Portales post office. The Malibu was also the same vehicle Detective Hall and I observed VILLANUEVA operating on October 25, 2023, and the same vehicle I saw parked at SOI #3's residence that same day.
22. In the afternoon of November 6, 2023, I was notified by Roosevelt County Sheriff's Office (RCSO) Deputy J. Bonner that VILLANUEVA attempted to get the vehicle out of the towing yard. Since the vehicle is not registered to her and she is not able to provide proof of ownership, the vehicle was not released. A hold has been placed on the vehicle by Deputy Bonner.
23. On January 9, 2024, I removed a partly burned sponge/cloth like material from the fuel compartment of the LLV. This material was inserted into the fuel tank and set ablaze. I preserved the evidence and will be sending it to the New Mexico State Police Forensic Laboratory for DNA Analysis.

#### CONCLUSION

24. Based on the above information, I submit there is probable cause to believe Patricia VILLANUEVA committed violations of Title 18, U.S.C. Section 844(i): Actual or attempted damage or destruction, by means of fire or explosives, any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property used in the interstate or foreign commerce.



Jean-Lucien Souvenir  
United States Postal Inspector

Electronically signed and telephonically sworn on  
this 8<sup>th</sup> day of February 2024.



BARBARA SMITH EVANS  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE